United Nations E/AC.51/2013/3

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
20 February 2013

Original: English

Committee for Programme and Coordination
Fifty-third session
Substantive session, 3-28 June 2013
Item 3 (b) of the provisional agenda*
Programme questions: evaluation

Evaluation of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services

"The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has done much to fulfil its coordination mandate. At the same time, growing needs and the increasing complexity of the global humanitarian response system raise questions as to how the Office can most effectively fulfil its coordination mandate."

Summary

In recent years, as a result of natural disasters, there have been steady increases in the need for humanitarian services worldwide, compounded by rising food prices, the global financial crisis and increasing urbanization. Political conflict has also made increasing numbers of people reliant on humanitarian assistance. The number of people reported to have been affected by natural disasters doubled to more than 300 million between 2006 and 2010.

In accordance with its mandate, contained in General Assembly resolution 46/182 and subsequent resolutions, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has succeeded in positioning itself within the international humanitarian system as the convenor and facilitator of a range of important coordination tools for international humanitarian advocacy and response, including cluster coordination, the Consolidated Appeals Process, pooled funds and response preparedness initiatives. It has overseen a sizeable increase in funding for humanitarian crises. The total number of deployments of OCHA staff and partners from the four surge mechanisms managed by the Office rose nearly tenfold between 2006 and 2011. Moreover, OCHA has been instrumental in marshalling the most recent humanitarian system reform process, known as the "transformative agenda", within the Inter-Agency Standing Committee.

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At the same time, OCHA is central to a complex and multilayered humanitarian assistance structure of stakeholders and interventions, yet it lacks real authority to coordinate. The exercise of its mandate is dependent upon the trust and goodwill of actors who hold individual mandates, have more specialized technical competency and who often are in competition for visibility and scarce funds. The United Nations system partners are also often much larger in size and have more senior people positioned in the field.

There is a need for more clarity on where the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs' unique value-added and comparative advantage lies, at both the global and country levels. The Office of Internal Oversight Services makes one critical recommendation: the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs should work closely with its partners in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and its secretariat (United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction) and the United Nations Development Programme, in particular, to further clarify and articulate the respective roles and responsibilities of the Office and its partners in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee involved in response preparedness and disaster risk reduction work. Other recommendations are aimed at strengthening the ability of the Office to deploy and sustain appropriate leadership resources to field operations; further developing the plan for addressing the collective aspects of accountability envisaged in the transformative agenda; and improving the monitoring of the emergency response funds, common humanitarian funds and Central Emergency Response Funds, including establishing clear performance reporting, monitoring of fund usage and project effectiveness evaluation frameworks for each fund.

I. Introduction

1. As requested by the Committee for Programme and Coordination, the present evaluation report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) is submitted to the Committee for consideration at its fifty-third session, in June 2013. The evaluation was conducted in accordance with the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation (ST/SGB/2000/8). It has also been prepared in compliance with the norms and standards of the United Nations Evaluation Group.

II. Focus and methodology

2. The focus of the evaluation was to assess the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and impact of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). OIOS held consultations with staff and senior management of OCHA during the process of developing the terms of reference for the evaluation. The bulk of data collection for the evaluation was undertaken between October 2011 and June 2012.

3. The evaluation assessed the work of OCHA as a whole, at the global, regional and national levels. The evidence in the report is derived from a combination of documentary, testimonial, observational and analytical evidence collected through quantitative and qualitative methods, including:

(a) **Document review and analysis of quantitative data**, including mandates; budgets; workplans; guidelines; policies and manuals; periodic performance reporting data; and previous oversight and evaluation reports;

(b) **Stakeholder surveys**. Three self-administered web-based surveys of partners at the country and global level and Member States;[1]

(c) **Interviews**. 276 semi-structured interviews conducted in person or over the telephone with a purposive sample of management and staff from OCHA and from across the United Nations and a full range of non-governmental organizations and government stakeholders;[2]

(d) **Field missions for data collection and observation**. Six regional and country office site case studies, with locations chosen on purposive sampling basis taking into consideration the size of the office; humanitarian funding level; diversity among regions and typologies of humanitarian needs (e.g., relating to natural

[1] Yielding, respectively: 30 per cent response rate from 362 cluster coordinators/leads in 25 countries; 28 per cent response rate from 54 global partner members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs and a selection of humanitarian non-governmental organizations; and 12 per cent response rate from 193 Member States. To mitigate low response rates, survey data was not relied upon without triangulating data from additional sources, including documentary, testimonial and observational data from both primary and secondary sources.

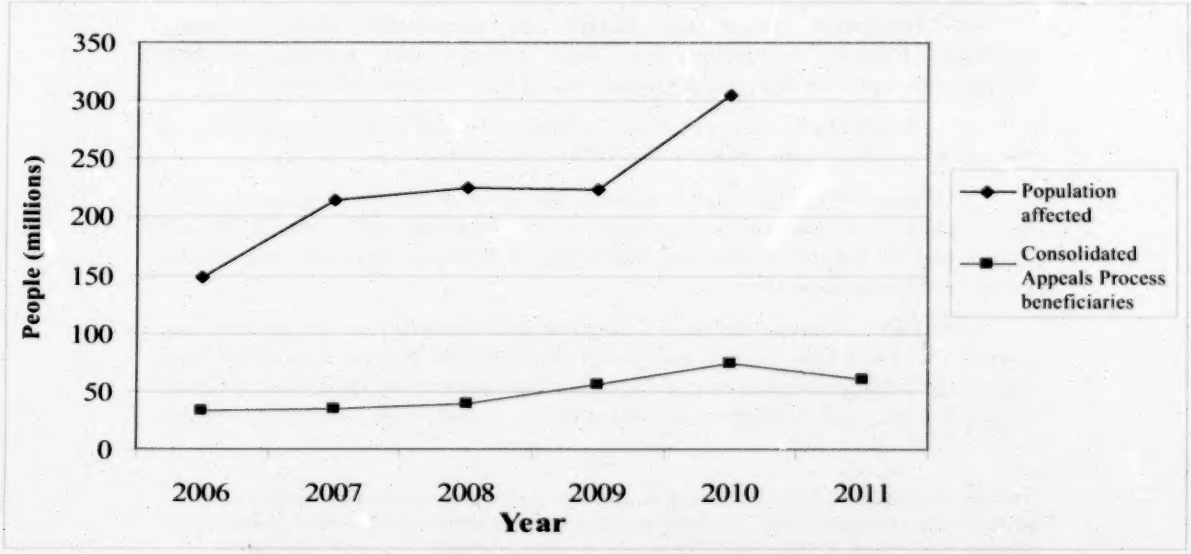
[2] 115 global partners of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and management and staff of OCHA in Geneva, New York and Rome; 21 humanitarian coordinators; 17 heads of office of OCHA; 123 interviews with staff of regional offices and country offices of OCHA and stakeholders in the field.

disasters or peacekeeping); inclusion of operations that were reputed to be effective and those that face significant challenges; as well as logistical and cost considerations.[3]

III. Background

4. The past six years have seen steady increases in the need for humanitarian services worldwide as a result of natural disasters, a problem compounded by rising food prices, the global financial crisis and increasing urbanization. In addition, political and security concerns complicate humanitarian action in many parts of the world. The number of people reported to have been affected by natural disasters doubled to more than 300 million between 2006 and 2010 (see annex I). During the three years between 2009 and 2011, the international humanitarian system had to respond to large-scale emergencies in Haiti, Pakistan and the Horn of Africa, which tested the strength and coherence of the system. Figure I provides information on recent natural disaster humanitarian need trends, including the number of people estimated to have been affected by natural disasters and the number of beneficiaries associated with the Consolidated Appeals Process. The information relating to the Consolidated Appeals Process serves as a proxy source of data for beneficiaries in need of humanitarian assistance from the international community.

Figure I
Humanitarian needs arising from natural disasters, 2006-2011

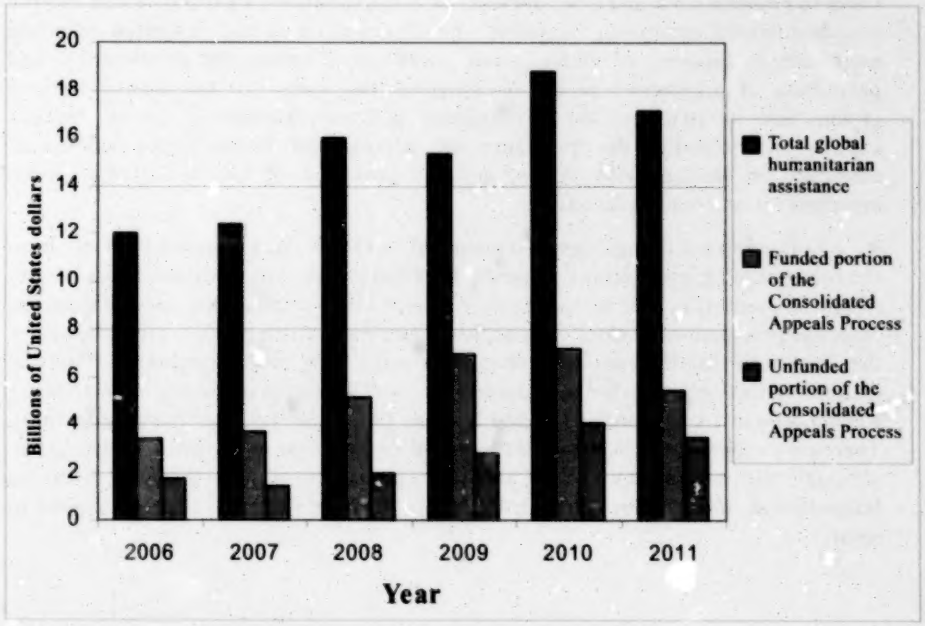


[3] The field missions involved in the case studies were those located in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Kenya (including the Somalia country office), Myanmar, South Sudan and Thailand.

5. In addition, during the past decade there has been an upward trend in global humanitarian assistance funding. Figure II provides information on the reported combined volume of humanitarian financing from all sources, together with requested and actual funds raised through the CAP process. While nominal funding levels have increased, the share of appeals under the Consolidated Appeals Process left unfunded increased between 2006 and 2011.

6. Meanwhile, the complexity of the international humanitarian response mechanism has increased over the past decade, with more mega-crises, larger numbers of actors and a rising need for assistance associated with both natural and man-made humanitarian emergencies. During the biennium 2009-2010, the international humanitarian system responded to 103 natural disasters and 43 complex emergencies, compared with 92 natural disasters and 41 complex emergencies during the biennium 2007-2008. Most funding went to a small number of protracted crises.[4]

Figure II
Humanitarian fundraising, 2006-2011



Mandate of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

7. The mandate for the Office derives from General Assembly resolution 46/182, establishing the Department of Humanitarian Assistance, which in 1998 was renamed the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. The mandate also created the high-level position of the Emergency Relief Coordinator and led to the

[4] Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP), *The State of the Humanitarian System 2012* (Overseas Development Institute, London, 2012); data from OCHA, Financial Tracking Service, available from http://fts.unocha.org.

subsequent establishment of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, the Consolidated Appeals Process and the Central Emergency Response Fund mechanisms. The programme of work for the Office is managed by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, who also acts as the Emergency Relief Coordinator. The work is implemented by two headquarter offices located in New York and Geneva, as well as eight regional offices and 24 country offices (see ST/SGB/1999/8). The total budget for the Office has increased significantly over the past three bienniums as a result of extrabudgetary funding. The proposed budget for the 2012-2013 biennium is $526 million, of which approximately 96 per cent is funded from extrabudgetary resources, and 60 per cent is spent on field operations.

8. The presentation of results in the report is organized to align with the substantive mandate of the Office, which derives from resolution 46/182 and subsequent resolutions. The mandate is summarized in the strategic framework for the period 2012-2013, as presented to the General Assembly (A/65/6/Rev.1 (Programme 22)), which states that the overall purpose of the programme is to ensure the timely, coherent and coordinated response of the international community to disasters and emergencies and to facilitate the smooth transition from emergency relief to rehabilitation and development. OCHA implements its mandate through the coordination of emergency response and contribution to the enhanced response preparedness capacity of national and international actors; the development and promotion of a common policy on humanitarian issues for the United Nations system and its partners; the development and mobilization of United Nations capacity to expedite the provision of international humanitarian assistance; advocacy on humanitarian issues; and the provision of timely information on emergencies and natural disasters.

9. Following a scoping exercise conducted by OIOS, the following elements form the focus of the present report: ensuring the timeliness of international humanitarian response; ensuring the response is coherent and coordinated; and enhancing response preparedness capacity. In addition, key cross-cutting issues are reviewed in the final result of the report. It should be noted that subprogramme 3, "Natural disaster reduction", is wholly managed by the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and its secretariat (United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction). Therefore, subprogramme 3 was not included in the scope of the present evaluation, although the role of OCHA in response preparedness and linkages with the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and its secretariat are addressed in result C.

IV. Evaluation results

A. Ensuring timeliness of international humanitarian response

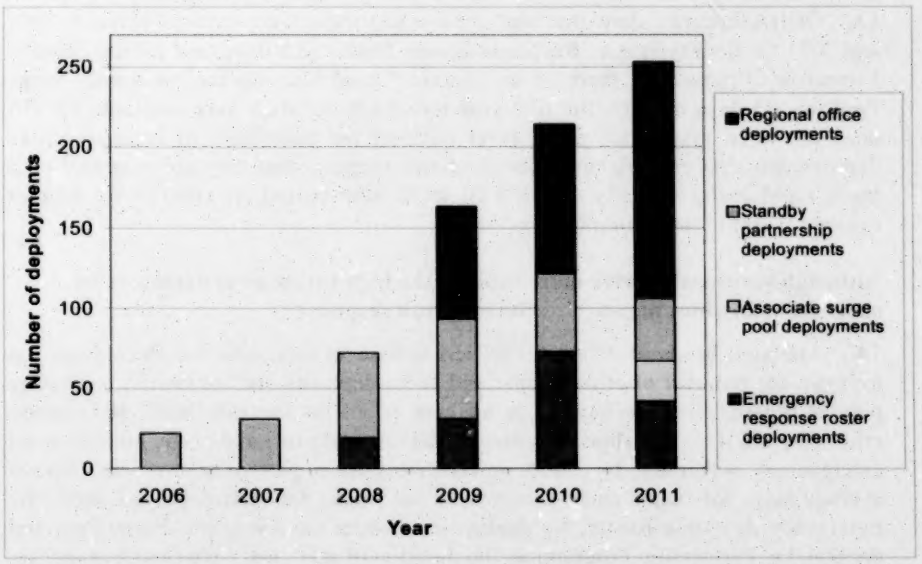
OCHA contributed to timelier humanitarian responses with improvements in timeliness of surge deployment

10. In an effort to ensure the timeliness of international responses, the main focus for OCHA has been on efforts to establish mechanisms to deploy its humanitarian staff on short notice, in particular, through the use of surge deployment rosters.[5]

OCHA has increased number of surge deployments

11. In recent years, OCHA has sought to increase the efficiency of surge deployments and to maximize the match between the skill sets of those deployed and needs on the ground. Part of the strategy is for OCHA to rely more heavily on staff with regionally based knowledge who have physical proximity to a given sudden-onset disaster. Every year since 2009, the number of regional office surge deployments has increased (see figure III). In addition, the total number of deployments of staff and partners from the four existing surge mechanisms has risen steadily since 2006 (see also para. 12 below).

Figure III
Surge deployments by mechanism, 2006-2011



[5] See the real-time evaluations by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee of humanitarian responses to the earthquake in Haiti (evaluation issued in 2012), the flood crisis in Pakistan (evaluation issued in 2011), the response to cyclone Nargis (evaluation issued in 2008) and to the drought crisis in the Horn of Africa (evaluation issued in 2012).

OCHA made some progress on the timeliness of the deployment of surge mechanisms in an effort to improve the international humanitarian response

12. OCHA deploys staff in emergency responses through internal and external surge staffing mechanisms.

(a) The first wave of responders is composed of regional office staff, usually deployed within days of the onset of an emergency and typically for quite a short duration.

(b) Another internal surge mechanism is the Emergency Response Roster, which consists of 35 staff members from OCHA available to deploy within a few days, for a period of six weeks to three months.

(c) Since 2010, there has also been an Associates Surge Pool, which in 2012 consisted of 115 professionals (from levels P-3 to D-1) mobilized to bridge gaps between the availability of immediately deployed internal staff and the arrival of external staff.

(d) Moreover, OCHA has agreements with 12 partner organizations through the Standby Partnership Programme to provide short-term staffing to field operations free of charge. Partners maintain their own rosters and provide staff for an average of five to six months.

(e) Lastly, in 2012, OCHA introduced the Roaming Emergency Surge Officer roster, a pool of three staff members from OCHA (two at the P-5 level and one P-4) expected to spend 80 per cent of their work year on deployments.

13. OCHA statistics show that lead deployment times were reduced between 2009 and 2011 for the Emergency Response Roster, from 7 to 3 days, and for the Standby Partnership Programme, from 38 to 23 days.[6] Lead time for the Associates Surge Pool was 33 days in 2011, the first year for which statistics were available. OCHA does not have systematic global-level data on the timeliness of regional office deployments, but credible anecdotal evidence suggests that they are executed on a fairly rapid basis, typically within a 24 to 72 hour period, as cited in the case of cyclone Washi in the Philippines, in 2011.

Although surge staff arrive more rapidly, the high turnover of deployees on short-term missions negatively affects overall response

14. Although heads of office for OCHA remain in their jobs for three years, on average, the turnover of other regular and surge-deployed staff of OCHA is cited by partner organizations as having an adverse effect on the timeliness of response efforts by OCHA. The short duration of deployments to large-scale, sudden-onset emergencies was cited by OIOS interviewees as a particular problem. Recent average stays for major emergencies were six weeks for staff deployed under the Emergency Response Roster; for deployments under the Associates Surge Pool and the Standby Partnership Programme, the duration of stays was between three and six months, in 2010.[7] In order to address these issues, OCHA reports the recent development of surge management guidance as well as a new training initiative, the Field Response Surge Training Course (FIRST), both intended to improve continuity.

[6] Excluding delays caused by force majeure, such as visa delays.

[7] See OCHA surge capacity section overviews, available from www.unocha.org.

Recruitment timeframes for regular staff remain long

15. The recruitment process for regular staff of OCHA averaged 242 days in 2010 and 193 in 2009.[8] Managers, staff and stakeholders agree that the recruitment lags remain a constraint to the ability of OCHA to get staff on the ground quickly enough. While OCHA has indicated that it is identifying options for improved use of administrative arrangements, specific information on the status of such a review was not available.

B. Ensuring coherent and coordinated response

1. Stakeholders recognize the need for OCHA and see its advocacy leadership as successful, however, authority limits and other dilemmas challenge coordination work

Together with partners in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, OCHA marshalled the development of the transformative agenda

16. The role of OCHA in coordination is carried out at two distinct levels, first within the global advocacy and policy arena, and second at the level of ongoing country and/or regional humanitarian response operations. The global work is centred around the emergency relief coordination function and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee mechanism[9] and involves promoting humanitarian principles, as endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolutions 46/182 and 58/114, together with liaison among agencies at the headquarter level. In addition, at the global level the role of OCHA includes interaction with the political apparatus of the United Nations at Headquarters (e.g., the General Assembly, the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, the Security Council, the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations). A key aspect of the leadership role has been the efforts by OCHA to marshal the most recent humanitarian system reform process, the transformative agenda, under the umbrella of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee.

17. At the country level, the humanitarian coordinator, who usually also serves as the resident coordinator upon appointment by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), is in charge of the humanitarian country team. The humanitarian coordinator is not an OCHA staff member, but is supported by the head of office for OCHA in marshalling the cluster system, which is the practical foundation of coordination efforts in the international humanitarian response

[8] According to figures from the 2010 assessment of the United Nations human resources action planning cycle.

[9] The Inter-Agency Standing Committee was established in June 1992 in response to General Assembly resolution 46/182 on strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations. The principals of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee are the heads of member entities. In its resolution 48/57, the General Assembly stressed the role of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee as the primary mechanism for inter-agency coordination of humanitarian assistance.

theatre.[10] OCHA is specifically tasked to support inter-cluster coordination. A key function for the humanitarian coordinator involves the coordination of the humanitarian actors' engagement with national authorities. This pertains to the prioritization of needs, collaboration between international agencies and national and local emergency response institutions, as well as the sensitive matter of access to conflict areas.

The importance of the impartial mandate of OCHA is understood, but OCHA is challenged when coordinating among much bigger actors at the global and country levels

18. A number of stakeholders point to coordination within the United Nations as being complicated by systemic governance and accountability arrangements, at times being fragmented among entities with separate governing bodies and overlapping mandates that have differing approaches to the exercise of centralized or delegated authority.[11] The degree to which effective coordination can be achieved is dependent upon the willingness of participant entities to voluntarily align their substantive and operational agendas. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee is intended to be the mechanism through which accountability among voluntary actors is achieved; the recently endorsed transformative agenda is the primary vehicle being utilized in pursuit of this goal. While OCHA has a formal mandate to lead coordination, this alone is not a sufficiently strong incentive for other actors to be coordinated, as aspects such as the size of each organization and the seniority of their staff also have an impact on such matters. In the field, staff from OCHA are frequently tasked with coordinating colleagues who hold more senior positions. Typically, the head of office for OCHA is at the P-4 or P-5 level, which is often more junior than the managers of key humanitarian country team entities. Currently, out of 22 country offices for OCHA, eight are headed by a staff member at the D-1 level.

19. At the same time, because the mandate of OCHA does not involve direct service delivery to beneficiaries, it is able to perform coordination tasks in a more neutral manner than an implementing entity. Stakeholders consulted agreed that "if OCHA did not exist, it would have to be invented" and 86 per cent of stakeholder survey respondents at the country level either agreed or strongly agreed that the added value of OCHA was essential for the operation of the international humanitarian system. Interviewees at the global level also acknowledged the normative and governance value of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, including the role of OCHA.

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[10] Following the set of mechanisms introduced in 1991 (see General Assembly resolution 46/182), the humanitarian reforms of 2005 introduced elements to improve capacity, predictability, accountability, leadership and partnership, including the cluster approach, which entails groups of humanitarian organizations (both of the United Nations system and other actors) working in main sectors of humanitarian action: sanitation, water and hygiene; health; nutrition; education; food security; emergency shelter; camp management and coordination; protection; emergency telecommunications; logistics; and early recovery.

[11] Variances in practice of accountability among United Nations entities have most recently been described by the Joint Inspection Unit in its report, as transmitted by the Secretary-General (A/66/710; see also the related comments of the Secretary-General and of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, A/66/710/Add.1).

20. However, at the country level, the role of humanitarian coordinator embodies the authority and accountability dilemma of the humanitarian system as a whole. Most humanitarian coordinators are directly accountable to UNDP as their hiring agency but also have a reporting line to the Emergency Relief Coordinator for their humanitarian work. In support of the Emergency Relief Coordinator, OCHA has worked to initiate actions to address this challenge. For example, the Emergency Relief Coordinator has sought to clarify the role of humanitarian coordinator and improve accountability within that role by focusing attention on revisions to the performance appraisal system. While performance appraisals of resident coordinators and/or humanitarian coordinators have consistently been performed by the individual entities by whom they were appointed, in 2011 only 8 of the 32 resident coordinators and/or humanitarian coordinators had compacts in place with the Emergency Relief Coordinator. Recent improvements have been made; for the 2012 reporting period, compacts were in place for 31 of the 32 resident coordinators and/or humanitarian coordinators and monthly meetings have been established between each humanitarian coordinator and the Director of the Coordination and Response Division, in order to ensure follow-up on compact objectives. In addition, OCHA has indicated that a strengthened performance appraisal system has been put in place whereby a panel of operational directors from members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee meets each year to assess the performance of humanitarian coordinators, providing the basis for the appraisal by the Emergency Relief Coordinator. However, the arrangement of a secondary reporting line between humanitarian coordinators and the Emergency Relief Coordinator is cited by many interviewees as continuing to present management challenges.

21. Challenges also remain with regard to the cluster system mechanism and humanitarian country teams, as evidenced by the low satisfaction expressed by multiple humanitarian coordinators, heads of office for OCHA and implementing partners, in interviews with OIOS. Many interviewees viewed the cluster system mechanism as having become too rigid and process-oriented, with maintenance of the cluster structure, or individual cluster leadership roles, having become at times a primary goal of its own. Other issues raised by cluster leads included the need for OCHA to take the lead in improving inter-cluster coordination and a perception that requests from OCHA for information were, at times, an onerous one-way affair.

22. At the same time, the challenges around the cluster system are recognized by OCHA and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, as evidenced by the transformative agenda process under which agreement has been reached on streamlining the cluster system. This would include reducing the number of clusters when necessity does not dictate a need for the full complement.[12]

OCHA advocacy has brought increased funding and attention to the humanitarian agenda

23. In terms of raising the visibility of humanitarian crises among Member States, the Emergency Relief Coordinator, staff of OCHA and humanitarian coordinators have played a powerful advocacy role that was recognized by many in the global

[12] In the third quarter of 2012, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee endorsed and circulated a reference module for cluster coordination at the country level, a field-focused tool to ensure clusters are adapted to the local context, flexible in approach and reviewed periodically. OCHA committed to support the roll-out of the module and to monitor its impact in 2013.

stakeholder interviews. Interviewees cited, in particular, recent advocacy successes including the attention directed towards the food crisis in the Sahel and assistance provided during discussions on the terms for civil-military coordination in Libya. With regard to humanitarian access advocacy, the Emergency Relief Coordinator has used her voice with the United Nations peace and security apparatus, as well as with national authorities, in order to push for increased humanitarian worker access to those in need. Humanitarian organizations reported to OIOS that, when successful, they highly valued these interventions because they paved the way for improved impact from humanitarian assistance activities.

24. OCHA also plays a key advocacy role within the context of its humanitarian financing activities. While decisions on prioritizing life-saving activities are managed by humanitarian actors on the ground, OCHA coordinates the resulting Consolidated Appeals Process. The appeals are developed on an annual basis in countries where there are humanitarian needs; flash appeals are developed following a sudden-onset emergency such as a flood or an earthquake. OCHA also manages the Financial Tracking Service database used to record all funding. Because the Consolidated Appeals Process is a mechanism to advocate for financing of humanitarian assistance projects, the sustained increase in the volume of funding received from donors can be viewed as one possible endorsement for the effectiveness of OCHA advocacy work. Funding received to support projects through the Consolidated Appeals Process increased steadily during the period from 2006 to 2011, from $3.5 billion in 2006 to $5.4 billion in 2011.[13] Between 2006 and 2011, the number of participant agencies that submitted their project-based needs for inclusion in the Consolidated Appeals Process increased threefold, according to data recorded in the Financial Tracking Service. Stakeholders at the country level who responded to the survey rated the Consolidated Appeals Process favourably; 69 per cent rated it excellent or good, 23 per cent fair and 8 per cent poor or very poor.

2. OCHA has effectively fundraised and managed humanitarian response funds; accountability gaps remain

25. Another aspect of the coordination mandate of OCHA is its role in raising appeals and managing pooled humanitarian funds. The Central Emergency Response Fund is a central funding mechanism managed by a secretariat based in New York. The emergency response funds and common humanitarian funds are pooled funds at the country level under the overall management and oversight of the humanitarian coordinator, with significant day-to-day management performed by OCHA. For common humanitarian funds, UNDP provides the service of managing agent in four out of the five funds.[14] In addition, the Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office of UNDP provides the service of administrative agent, managing contributions and channelling funds to United Nations agencies for all common humanitarian funds.

26. All pooled funds complement important coordination mechanisms at the country level such as the Consolidated Appeals Process and cluster coordination. The common humanitarian funds provide funding to address the most critical needs

[13] Between 2006 and 2011, 88 appeals were issued under the Consolidated Appeals Process, along with 92 other appeals, including flash appeals and other types of appeals.

[14] Common humanitarian funds are currently established for the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, South Sudan and the Sudan.

within the Consolidated Appeals Process framework; prioritized through consultations. Common humanitarian funds are established in large-scale emergencies. Typically, emergency response funds are granted primarily for sudden-onset emergencies and for filling gaps. They are smaller in size relative to common humanitarian funds.

Funds contribute to rapid and flexible responses

27. All stakeholders concur that pooled fund mechanisms provide the international humanitarian system with relatively rapid and flexible funding for emergency responses. The fundraising for and management of the Central Emergency Response Fund, the common humanitarian funds and the emergency response funds represent a function in which a majority of stakeholders agree that OCHA has generally performed well. It is the tool most praised by stakeholders as clearly adding value. One reason is that OCHA has a clearly defined and uncontested role in fundraising for and management of the funds, thereby enabling the Office to perform this work without having to manage diverging expectations from key stakeholders as is perceived in other areas of its work. Figures IV, V and VI below show the generally upward funding trends for the Central Emergency Response Fund, the emergency response funds and the common humanitarian funds between 2006 and 2012. The peak in emergency response funds in 2010 is largely attributed to appeals launched in the wake of the two large-scale emergencies in 2010, namely the earthquake in Haiti and the floods in Pakistan.

Figure IV
Central Emergency Response Fund contributions, 2006-2012

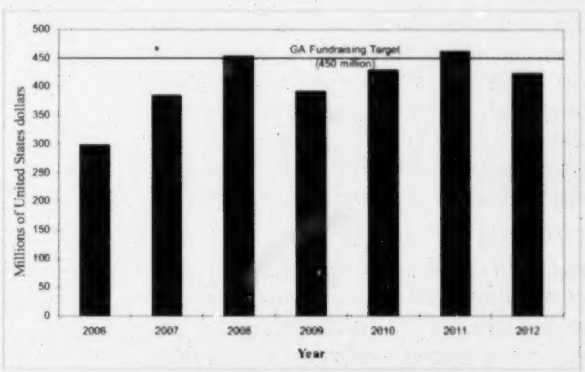


Figure V
Emergency response funds contributions, 2006-2012

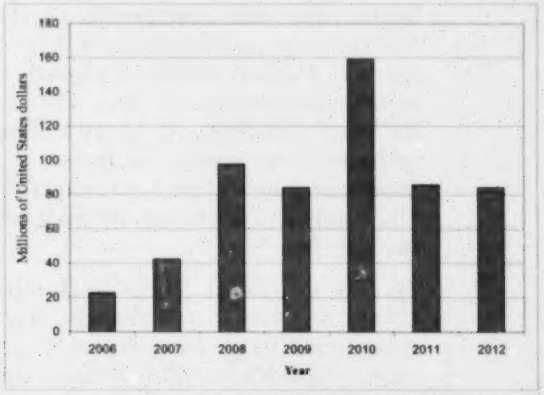
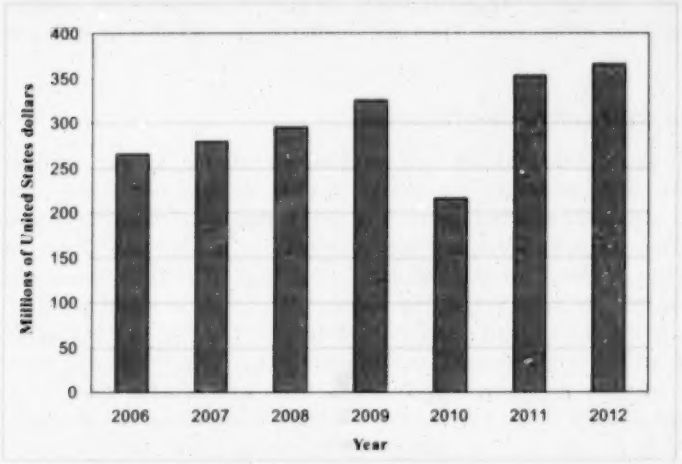


Figure VI
Common humanitarian funds contribution, 2006-2012



The Central Emergency Response Fund has been an effective mechanism for rapid initial funding and for underfunded emergencies; country-based pooled funds such as emergency response funds and common humanitarian funds have acted as an incentive for greater participation within the in-country humanitarian coordination system

28. Since the introduction of the grant element in 2006, the Central Emergency Response Fund has provided rapid initial funding for assistance at the onset of a humanitarian crisis, and provided critical support for underfunded emergencies. It has achieved notable results both in terms of raising funds and increasing the number of donors providing support. In financial terms, there was a 56 per cent increase in contributions, from $300 million to $459.7 million, between 2006 and 2011 (see A/67/361). The $450 million target set by the General Assembly was surpassed twice during this period, as illustrated in figure IV.[15] Additionally, the number of donors to the Fund increased from 52 in 2006 to 79 in 2011 (see annex I). The Fund has, on average, received between 80 and 95 per cent of its established requirements.

29. At the global level, the Under-Secretary-General and Emergency Relief Coordinator has overall responsibility for funding decisions and programmatic management of the Fund. In doing so, she is supported by the secretariat for the Fund within OCHA, which is tasked with reviewing funding applications, providing guidance to countries applying for funds, preparing proposals and facilitating the disbursal of funds, as well as reviewing financial and narrative reports. Resident coordinators and/or humanitarian coordinators are responsible for the management of the processes relating to the Fund at the country level and are supported by country offices of OCHA, where present. Donors to the Fund and other stakeholders consistently reported satisfaction with the role played by OCHA in the fund allocation process. They commended OCHA for increasing the quality of fund allocation information provided to donors.

[15] Further information available from www.unocha.org/cerf/.

30. Stakeholders consulted provided positive feedback on the management of the country-based pooled funds, including emergency response funds and common humanitarian funds, indicating that they act as an incentive for greater participation within the in-country humanitarian coordination system. Another benefit of the pooled funds at the country level that was consistently mentioned by implementing partners is the availability of the funds to non-governmental organizations (unlike the funds from the Central Emergency Response Fund), thereby broadening the scope of the funds and potentially shortening disbursement times. Since 2006, on average, non-governmental organizations have received 65 per cent of emergency response funds and 42 per cent of common humanitarian funds.[16]

Weaknesses in coordination and accountability exist as a result of limited monitoring of the usage of emergency response funds, common humanitarian funds and, to a lesser degree, the Central Emergency Response Fund

31. Deficits in performance reporting were identified as a weakness for the pooled funds at the country level. Many interviewees, including donors and staff of OCHA, raised concerns about the uneven monitoring at the project level, especially with regard to emergency response funds, for example, in the form of project visits, a concern that is underpinned by recent audit reports by OIOS.[17] This weakness is somewhat related to the subcontracting of implementing partners from OCHA to United Nations agencies and, in some cases, to non-governmental organizations as implementing partners, thereby contributing to long, complex lines of accountability. OCHA has recently taken steps to roll out monitoring frameworks for common humanitarian funds and emergency response funds in an attempt to strengthen monitoring of both funds.

32. With regard to the Central Emergency Response Fund, accountability is sought through a variety of tools described in the Performance and Accountability Framework for the Fund, which seeks to outline how performance of the Fund is measured, as well as the responsibilities of all parties involved in the Fund. Ultimately, recipient agencies bear the primary responsibility for ensuring appropriate use of the funds, including for any monitoring at the project level. Humanitarian coordinators and the secretariat for the Fund, through their compilations of reporting at the country level, seek to complement other performance monitoring. The results of these compilations are produced as an annual report issued at the global level. Country offices of OCHA have no formal mandate to exercise oversight and blurred lines of accountability exist among humanitarian system actors in terms of performance reporting, thus rendering it difficult for OCHA to obtain information on the performance of the Fund.

[16] For further information, see the reports of the Internal Audit Division of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), including the audit of OCHA management of the Haiti Emergency Relief and Response Fund (May 2012) and the report by Global Humanitarian Assistance, "Emergency Response Funds: Profile" (July 2011).

[17] See, for example, audit reports by OIOS on governance arrangements for the common humanitarian fund for the Sudan (2010), on OCHA management of the Haiti Emergency Relief and Response Fund (May 2012) and on OCHA management of emergency response funds (2010).

C. Enhancing response preparedness capacity

Response preparedness work undertaken by OCHA lacks a clear focus within the context of preparedness and disaster risk reduction work of its partners

33. The mandate of OCHA includes contributing to enhanced response preparedness. The translation of the mandate into operational practice is oriented towards the capacity to respond to disasters and emergencies and, in particular, towards strengthening the capacity of national authorities and regional organizations to request or help mobilize internal humanitarian assistance and to effectively utilize the in-country humanitarian coordination systems.[18]

OCHA regional offices are focused on response preparedness work

34. The needs and modus operandi of preparedness work clearly differ along the spectrum, from least developed countries in conflict with hardly any national emergency response apparatus, on the one hand, to politically stable and prosperous middle-income countries with considerable domestic institutional capacities, on the other hand. All along the spectrum there are sensitivities among host governments to engaging in preparedness efforts under the international humanitarian umbrella.

35. Response preparedness work is among the key functions assigned to regional offices of OCHA. OCHA has, in particular, invested significant resources in the regional office for Asia and the Pacific to develop and pilot new preparedness initiatives. The regional office for Latin America and the Caribbean is also heavily engaged in preparedness work. The regional office for Asia and the Pacific has developed a global focus model and piloted a country-level integrated preparedness package for emergency response (CLIPPER). OCHA further developed the country-level solution into a minimum preparedness package and, in September 2011, all regional offices agreed to roll out an adapted model of the package in their respective regions during 2012. However, questions have been raised with regard to the applicability of such products to regional contexts other than Asia-Pacific. In the Middle East and Central Asia region, OCHA preparedness efforts have a particular focus on contingency planning. In Africa, on the other hand, interviewees stated that humanitarian response preparedness activities are frequently displaced by other priorities under the broader development agenda.

Unclear division of response preparedness and disaster risk reduction roles among OCHA, the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery of UNDP and the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and its secretariat is problematic

36. Whereas the response preparedness work undertaken by OCHA is valued by many stakeholders, concerns were raised about a lack of clear roles, responsibilities and operating boundaries between OCHA and organizations working on the disaster risk reduction agenda, UNDP and the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and its secretariat, in particular. A key challenge is that response preparedness and disaster risk reduction culminate into a shared responsibility of development and

[18] For further information, see www.unocha.org/what-we-do/coordination/preparedness/overview; see also subprogramme 4 of the strategic framework for 2012-2013 (A/65/6/Rev.1).

humanitarian actors. OCHA acknowledges aspects of this challenge and has recently commissioned an evaluation of its role in response preparedness.

37. In the response preparedness and disaster risk reduction arena, several partners of OCHA have pertinent mandates. Firstly, the secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction is tasked with the role of being the focal point in the United Nations system for the coordination of disaster risk reduction and ensuring synergies among disaster risk reduction activities.[19] This is a mandate many stakeholders perceive to be very similar to the response preparedness mandate of OCHA, even if it is recognized that an entirely separate forum and process for Member State liaison and reporting, centred upon the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters, exists. Additionally, the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery of UNDP supports crisis prevention, early warning and conflict resolution. The capacity for Disaster Reduction Initiative was established in 2007 as an inter-agency initiative of these three key entities. However, interviews and a document review by OIOS show a lack of awareness regarding the role of the initiative and the status of work undertaken within its framework to coordinate response preparedness and disaster risk reduction efforts. In interviews, the initiative was consistently mentioned by stakeholders as not living up to expectations for joint preparedness and disaster risk reduction work.

38. OCHA, recognizing the need to further define roles and responsibilities within OCHA and among partners, has included the need to improve clarity as one of its three medium-term objectives on preparedness in the strategic framework for 2010-2013. And, in an attempt to achieve increased clarity, a policy instruction on preparedness outlines three core roles for OCHA in preparedness; namely, strengthening of the internal response capacity, of the in-country coordination system and that of national authorities and regional organizations.[20] However, staff interviewed at the regional level stated that the policy instruction does not provide the degree of clarity needed at the field level, leading to differing interpretations of the role of OCHA. These differing interpretations are problematic because they can lead to inefficiencies and can contribute to gaps in the provision of response preparedness and disaster risk reduction support services.

39. Meanwhile, donors to OCHA have expressed the need to do more on preparedness and resilience and asked the Emergency Relief Coordinator to clarify the role of OCHA on these issues, including defining the role of OCHA in resilience and division of labour.[21] At the same time, they outlined the need for a coherent

[19] The International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and its secretariat is, for planning and budget purposes, organizationally embedded within the strategic framework of OCHA (subprogramme 3 of Programme 22), but is operationally and functionally independent from OCHA; it has a separate secretariat in Geneva and is led by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction, with a direct reporting line to the Secretary-General (as well as to the Under-Secretary-General of OCHA). The secretariat has recently been asked to lead work for the High-level Committee on Programmes of the United Nations Chief Executives Board for Coordination to form a United Nations system-wide plan for disaster risk reduction and indicates that this work is planned for presentation to the High-level Committee on Programmes in 2013.

[20] The policy instruction on preparedness was most recently revised in August 2012.

[21] See the chairs' summary of the high-level meeting between OCHA and the OCHA Donor Support Group, held on 12 and 13 June 2012.

approach by donors themselves, including with regard to funding for this work. These actions are needed in order to reduce inefficiency, improve impact and negate credibility risks for both OCHA specifically, as well as the broader "Delivering as one" agenda.

D. Cross-cutting aspects of the work of OCHA

With its medium-term strategic framework for 2010-2013, OCHA has articulated a strategy that has brought fundraising success; but gaps remain in performance monitoring

40. A clear set of programme objectives and a coherent framework for monitoring and evaluation are prerequisites for accountability and learning. OCHA has two sets of documents through which its objectives and strategy are described, in somewhat different manners, the first of which is the strategic framework presented to the General Assembly on a biennial basis, the second of which is the medium-term strategic framework for 2010-2013, as developed by OCHA.[22] While not inconsistent with each other, each document conveys a somewhat different approach and emphasis. The strategic framework presented to the General Assembly projects a set of expected accomplishments, indicators of achievement and mandated outcomes centred around five objectives articulated at the subprogramme level. A corresponding set of 386 planned outputs are reported in OCHA performance reporting data through the Integrated Monitoring and Documentation Information System. In an effort to streamline, OCHA reduced the number of planned outputs to 386, from more than 700 in the two prior bienniums. Excluding subprogramme 3 (natural disaster reduction), the four subprogrammes are: policy and analysis (subprogramme 1); coordination of humanitarian action and emergency response (subprogramme 2); emergency support services (subprogramme 4); and humanitarian emergency information and advocacy (subprogramme 5).

41. In its secondary document to describe rationale and direction, the medium-term strategic framework for 2010-2013, OCHA articulates its objectives and strategy through a focus on five core functions that the organization carries out in support of its mandate: coordination; policy development; advocacy; information management; and humanitarian financing. It identifies three organizational goals and 11 corresponding objectives that are serving as the current strategic road map for the Office. The organizational goals are as follows: a more enabling environment for humanitarian action; a more effective humanitarian coordination system; and strengthened management and administration of OCHA.

The medium-term strategic framework for 2010-2013 developed by OCHA has been a successful platform for extrabudgetary fundraising

42. By taking the initiative to develop a medium-term strategic framework for 2010-2013, OCHA has further articulated its goals and objectives in a manner that elaborates on the biennial strategic framework presented to the General Assembly.

[22] See the strategic framework for the period 2010-2011 (A/63/6/Rev.1), the strategic framework for the period 2012-2013 (A/65/6/Rev.1) and the reference guide for the medium-term strategic framework for 2010-2013, dated 14 April 2010. To distinguish between these two types of documents, the latter is referred to as the medium-term strategic framework for 2010-2013.

The medium-term strategic framework is conducive to engagement with external stakeholders and is more prominently referred by OCHA, for example, in its website. The latter framework is intended to further articulate the strategy and implementation plans of OCHA over a four-year period. Staff of OCHA and donors consider the biennial strategic framework insufficient to capture the transcending thematic priorities that have emerged from the cumulative learning of OCHA and its partners in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee. As a result, the medium-term strategic framework document is considered to be the key working document in terms of relevance for internal management purposes of OCHA.

43. Because OCHA relies more heavily on extrabudgetary funds than most programmes in the Secretariat, it is imperative to bring visibility to results that donors perceive to be worthy of their funding.[23] OCHA has had success in extrabudgetary fundraising. Over the past three bienniums (2006-2007, 2008-2009 and 2010-2011) voluntary and earmarked contributions to OCHA increased from $362 million to $650 million per biennium.[24] With allocations under the regular budget remaining stable, extrabudgetary fundraising is behind the 47 per cent total budget increase for OCHA during this period. At the same time, the ability of the Office to implement its mandate is vulnerable as a result of its strong reliance on voluntary contributions to support its operations. As noted in the annual report of OCHA for 2011, for all of the past five years, the top 10 donors to OCHA have accounted for, on average, 80 per cent of its extrabudgetary funding. The leadership of OCHA has taken steps towards broadening its donor base, including factoring in expanded donor diversity as a key issue in its resource mobilization strategy.

The monitoring and evaluation function of OCHA is in need of further strengthening

44. OIOS recently issued a programme manager report on the monitoring and evaluation activities of OCHA. The report found that there is significant room for improvement in monitoring and reporting by OCHA in terms of establishing a more meaningful relationship between what is done by the Office and how it is reported, so that information can be more useful and greater attention can be given to the quality and verifiability of information. The report recommended that OCHA consider further strengthening the independence of its evaluation function, including reporting lines; review its evaluation policy to clarify the role, conduct and use of self-evaluation activities performed outside of its central evaluation unit; increase awareness of its evaluation policy and the role of evaluation; and continue to emphasize the importance of sharing lessons learned.

45. Building on the earlier review by OIOS, the present report further notes that, at the time of evaluation, the centralized evaluation unit of OCHA has two distinct roles. The first is to carry out internal evaluations and the second is to serve as the secretariat for inter-agency evaluations within the Inter-Agency Standing Committee. During the period between 2009 and 2012, 11 internal evaluations were completed and 12 inter-agency evaluations were serviced, 10 of which were so-called "real-time evaluations". With regard to the internal evaluation work, the evaluation reports were of generally good quality. However, while there is some

[23] See the policy instruction of OCHA on resource mobilization, most recently revised in June 2011.

[24] See the annual reports of OCHA for 2006, 2007, 2010 and 2011.

evidence of increasing usage, interviews held by OIOS with staff and management of OCHA indicate that evaluation results were not heavily utilized in decision-making. Following the earlier review by OIOS, OCHA has recently taken the positive step of elevating the evaluation function within the organizational structure, placing it in close proximity to the central monitoring function, from which it was previously disconnected.

46. Regarding joint inter-agency evaluations serviced by OCHA, most evaluation partners interviewed by OIOS described the process as problematic, as did OCHA itself. These evaluations must be jointly commissioned, designed, managed and financed. All partners of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, including OCHA, bring their own agendas to the table and OCHA has little authority to bring to its coordination role. While a standard operating procedure document exists, it has proven difficult to achieve sufficient agreement on a number of key implementation issues, including methodology. Real-time evaluations, in particular, are viewed with doubt as to whether the benefits being achieved outweigh the costs. Of the three real-time evaluations subjected to detailed review by OIOS, the quality of two was rated fair; the third was rated good. Additionally, interviewees from OCHA and its partners in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee indicate that these evaluations have usually been delayed by six to nine months. They indicate that work is under way, in the context of the transformative agenda, to transform the process utilized to perform joint inter-agency evaluations. The work is also being done within the context of ongoing inter-agency efforts to improve performance management, accountability and evaluation, including work by the United Nations Evaluation Group.

47. Survey respondents from among stakeholders at the country level also did not rate OCHA highly on the usefulness of monitoring and evaluation documents: 8 per cent rated the documents as excellent; 22 per cent, good; 40 per cent, fair; 23 per cent, poor; and 7 per cent, very poor. In interviews with OIOS, global stakeholders also consistently cited the need for OCHA to continue to improve its performance monitoring. In particular, stakeholders mentioned the need for OCHA to demonstrate the value it adds to humanitarian response efforts. This was viewed as a prerequisite for OCHA to gain credibility so as to promote mutual accountability in the international humanitarian system, as envisioned for the success of the transformative agenda.

V. Conclusion

48. OCHA is the nexus of a complex humanitarian assistance structure, with multiple stakeholders and layers of interventions being implemented under the guidance of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and the Emergency Relief Coordinator. No single data source allows for quantification of the degree to which the international humanitarian system has improved efficiency, effectiveness or the final impact upon those affected by natural and man-made disasters. Likewise, no unequivocal aggregate data is available to quantify trends in demand for humanitarian response. Nevertheless, triangulating from multiple data sets, the evaluation team of OIOS concludes that OCHA has played a positive role in strengthening coherence of the international humanitarian response system.

49. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has done much to fulfil its coordination mandate. At the same time, growing needs and the increasing complexity of the global humanitarian response system raise questions as to how the Office can most effectively fulfil its coordination mandate. OCHA has succeeded in raising awareness through its global advocacy work. As the convenor and coordinator within the international humanitarian community it has, with the support of humanitarian coordinators and humanitarian country teams at the country level, successfully championed a range of important coordination and information management tools for international humanitarian response, among which are the cluster coordination approach, the Consolidated Appeals Process, pooled funds and preparedness initiatives.

50. However, OCHA suffers from a lack of real authority to coordinate a system of voluntary stakeholders who have individual mandates and deep experience in field operations and who are in competition for visibility and scarce resources. Many of its United Nations system partners are also much larger and have positioned more senior people in the field. OCHA is therefore dependent on their goodwill and their perception of the value OCHA services add.

51. The work to implement the transformative agenda reforms will be crucial in the coming years. Two issues, in particular, warrant attention. First, there is a need for strengthened accountability to the broader international community of humanitarian stakeholders. Second, as the notion of resilience gains currency as the central rationale for efforts to bridge humanitarian assistance with the development agenda, the role of OCHA versus that of other actors in the response preparedness and disaster risk reduction arena needs more clarity.

VI. Recommendations

52. Subject to acceptance by the Committee for Programme and Coordination, OIOS makes the following recommendations. The memorandum by OCHA commenting on the present report can be found in annex II. The organization's draft action plan is summarized below in italics.

Critical recommendation

Recommendation 1

53. OCHA should work closely with partners in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and its secretariat and the United Nations Development Programme, in particular, as well as the United Nations Development Group, to further clarify and articulate respective roles and responsibilities among OCHA and its partners in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee involved in preparedness and disaster risk reduction work. **[See paras. 33-39]**

54. *OCHA accepts proposed recommendation 1 and states that clarification on roles is being addressed in the context of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee through development of a common framework for capacity development for emergency preparedness. In addition, an internal evaluation of the role of OCHA in preparedness is being undertaken.*

Important recommendations

Recommendation 2

55. OCHA should ensure that appropriately senior and technically competent leadership resources are available for prompt deployment to the field, and sustained during humanitarian crises, especially for major emergencies. **[See paras. 14 and 15, 18 and 20]**

56. *OCHA accepts proposed recommendation 2 and states that initiatives are under way to increase the length of surge deployments; broaden the pool of staff at a senior level in surge mechanisms; and support humanitarian country teams in fostering collective in-country leadership.*

Recommendation 3

57. As part of the implementation of the transformative agenda of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, OCHA should take a leadership role in developing a proposal to assess its effectiveness. This should include a periodic reporting system that can be utilized to track the accomplishment of the mutual accountability goal within the transformative agenda and may include an inter-agency evaluation of the effectiveness of the implementation of the transformative agenda. **[See paras. 16-18; 20-22 and 46 and 47]**

58. *OCHA accepts proposed recommendation 3 and states that OCHA will continue to take the lead to strengthen the response monitoring framework of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, which will be adapted to country contexts and field tested. OCHA will also lead work to strengthen other systems that monitor implementation of the transformative agenda.*

Recommendation 4

59. OCHA should work with the humanitarian coordinators and/or resident coordinators and recipient organizations to further strengthen performance reporting and evaluation on the emergency response funds, common humanitarian funds and the Central Emergency Response Fund. This should include establishing, where not already present, monitoring and evaluation frameworks for each of the country-level pooled funds and working to ensure that OCHA and recipient organizations will dedicate sufficient resources for monitoring and evaluation. OCHA should further clarify the role and responsibilities of the managing agent in relation to monitoring and evaluation of the common humanitarian funds. Finally, specific indicators to monitor the performance of the emergency response funds, common humanitarian funds and the Central Emergency Response Fund should be included in the progress report developed in the context of transformative agenda reporting. **[See paras. 31 and 32]**

60. *OCHA accepts proposed recommendation 4 and lists multiple steps that OCHA and the secretariat of the Central Emergency Response Fund are taking to improve the monitoring and evaluation frameworks for the emergency response funds, common humanitarian funds and the Central Emergency Response Fund. OCHA commits to actively follow up on each of these initiatives.*

Recommendation 5

61. Within the context of the work being done as part of the transformative agenda, OCHA should work closely with partners in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee to revisit and improve the modalities being used to perform joint inter-agency evaluations. **[See paras. 45-47]**

62. *OCHA accepts proposed recommendation 5 and states that OCHA will work to engage all relevant actors in the establishment of clear research priorities and the definition of new evaluation mechanisms. OCHA will also participate in work to build an evidence base for assessing effectiveness of the transformative agenda.*

(*Signed*) Carman L. **Lapointe**
Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services
15 February 2013

Annex I

Key data[a]

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Humanitarian needs (population, in millions)						
Populations affected by natural disasters	147.5	214.4	225.4	223.2	304.4	
Beneficiaries under the Consolidated Appeals Process	33.7	34.6	39.8	55.1	73.3	60.6
Humanitarian fundraising (millions of United States dollars)						
Total global humanitarian assistance	12 000	12 400	16 000	15 300	18 800	17 100
Percentage of global official development assistance	10.4	9.4	11.8	10.2	–	–
Consolidated and flash appeals	5 100	5 100	7 100	9 750	11 250	8 900
Percentage covered	66	72	72	71	64	61
Total contributions under the Central Emergency Response Fund	259.3	350.9	428.8	397.4	415.2	426.2
Rapid Response	182.4	227.8	300.5	268.2	276.1	282.7
Underfunded window	76.9	123.1	128.3	129.2	139.2	143.5
Number of donors to the Central Emergency Response Fund	52	67	79	84	83	79
Contributions to common humanitarian funds	265	279	295	325	216	353
Number of common humanitarian funds	2	2	3	3	4	5
Number of donors to the common humanitarian funds	7	8	9	9	12	15
Funds raised under the emergency response funds	22	42	98	84	148	73

OCHA operations and outputs

(Millions of United States dollars)

	2006-2007	2008-2009	2010-2011
Regular budget OCHA	26.6	29.9	29.4
Voluntary plus earmarked (extrabudgetary) contributions to OCHA	362.0	500.3	650.0
Total OCHA budget	388.6	530.2	679.4
Regular budget as percentage of total budget	6.8	5.6	4.3
Number of OCHA staff			
Total	1 022	1 942	1 915
Regular budget	67	69	70
Number of people participating in training and fellowships facilitated by OCHA	2 636	1 333	5 031

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
OCHA regional office expenditure	11.1	17.3	23.3	20	23.3	25.9
OCHA country office expenditure	62.5	63.3	77.4	85.2	104.6	119.1
Number of OCHA						
Country offices	25	23	23	25	25	22
Regional offices	6	6	6	6	5	5
Humanitarian support units	–	–	23	14	16	14

[a] Numbers extracted from annual reports of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 2006 to 2011; www.unocha.org; Financial Tracking Service, available from www.fts.unocha.org; submitted to the General Assembly concerning budget numbers and staff, with the most recent budget numbers being used (A/62/6 (Sect. 26), A/64/6 (Sect. 26) and A/66/6 (Sect. 27)); International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, *World Disasters Report 2011*; Global Humanitarian Assistance (see www.globalhumanitarianassistance.org); data provided by OCHA in March, July and December 2012 and January 2013.

Annex II

Memorandum dated 22 January 2013 from the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator

Comments on the evaluation of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

1. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) would like to thank the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) for the opportunity to provide comments on the above-mentioned report. OCHA acknowledges the importance of the evaluation and extends its appreciation to OIOS for its collaborative approach throughout the evaluation process. The report identifies the complex and multi-layered structure within which OCHA works, and OCHA appreciates the fact that it highlights many key strengths of the Office, including: (a) its successful positioning within the humanitarian system as the convenor and facilitator of important coordination tools; (b) the contribution of OCHA to more timely humanitarian response with improvements in surge deployment; (c) successful advocacy leadership; and (d) effective fundraising and management by OCHA of humanitarian response funds.

2. OCHA has studied the report carefully and welcomes the findings and insights, which will support organizational learning and help it to focus its efforts on strengthening coordination work. The findings identified in the report are fully acknowledged and align with many of the priorities and areas in which OCHA is continuing to invest its efforts. To this end, OCHA has prepared a detailed action plan, outlining work that is under way to follow up on the critical and important recommendations in the report.

3. OCHA concurs with the recommendations in the report and would like to share its overall perspectives on the recommendations, as described below:

Recommendation 1

4. OCHA embraces its role in promoting and coordinating emergency response preparedness, recognizing that emergency preparedness and the broader issue of disaster risk reduction is a shared responsibility among the humanitarian entities of the United Nations and development partners. As such, OCHA agrees with the importance of clearly defining and further articulating the roles and responsibilities of humanitarian partners in emergency preparedness, particularly among the three key actors who have coordinating roles, namely the United Nations Development Programme, the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and its secretariat and OCHA. This is an issue that is central to the transformative agenda and one that OCHA has been working to address in close consultation with partners in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee.

Recommendation 2

5. OCHA recognizes that it is critically important for key humanitarian leadership personnel to be deployed and maintained in all emergencies. OCHA will continue to develop systems to improve the skills and accountability of

humanitarian coordinators and heads of office for OCHA, and seek solutions to promote staffing at the right level. To address the challenge of consistency and continuity of surge personnel in other key functions, OCHA has already introduced several new measures, which will be further rolled out over the coming period. As a result of these measures, Member States affected by crisis will be able to rely upon more consistent deployments of well-trained coordination leaders, who are better equipped with local languages and regional knowledge.

Recommendation 3

6. OCHA has played an instrumental role in facilitating the development of the transformative agenda. OCHA will continue to assess the effectiveness of humanitarian response and the improvements that have resulted from initiatives under the transformative agenda. OCHA will make use of its convening role to help build consensus around the means for assessing system-wide humanitarian action. A common, prioritized evaluation agenda will make a significant contribution towards building an evidence base for assessing the transformative agenda and its role in improving humanitarian effectiveness.

Recommendation 4

7. OCHA is well aware of the need to strengthen its oversight and monitoring of country-based pooled funding mechanisms and has been proactively addressing weaknesses in the system. OCHA has made considerable progress in 2012 by developing a comprehensive monitoring and reporting framework for all common humanitarian funds. Similarly, OCHA is in the process of developing a global monitoring and reporting framework for emergency response funds, which will be developed based on best practice in the various emergency response funds. OCHA further agrees with the view expressed by OIOS that performance monitoring, reporting and evaluation of interventions funded under the Central Emergency Response Fund is a priority and has been working towards strengthening this for several years. In 2010, OCHA developed a Performance and Accountability Framework for the Central Emergency Response Fund, which will be independently reviewed in 2013.

Recommendation 5

8. OCHA recognizes that inter-agency evaluations, while important for system-wide improvement, need strengthening. In connection with the development of the medium-term strategic framework for 2014-2017, OCHA is reviewing its evaluation policy and strategy. Discussions are already under way with partners in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee on improved modalities for conducting future inter-agency evaluations of humanitarian action. OCHA will also continue to work though the United Nations Evaluation Group to develop agreed modalities for conducting joint evaluations across the United Nations system and will also seek to include the views of a broad range of stakeholders who have an interest in inter-agency evaluations, including Member States. Moreover, as recommended by the General Assembly, OCHA will participate in the new interim coordination mechanism being established by the Secretary-General for conducting system-wide evaluations.